

## **Comparative studies on public and private dimensions in recognition of non-formal and informal learning**

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### **1. Research questions**

- **Who (what body/bodies) recognise non-formal and informal learning?**
- **What assessment methods are being practices?**
- **Have new information and communication technologies had impact on the issue?**
- **What are the costs of codifying such learning? (What would be the cost for: institutions/recognition organisations, if any, individuals, and governments?)**
- **How can we measure the ‘currency’ in the labour market?**
- **Under what conditions experiential knowledge/skills can be best codified? Under what conditions the codification can be barriers to learning?**

### **2. Background and purpose**

The OECD Education Committee’s activity, *The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning*, has identified a range of mechanisms through which the qualifications systems can contribute to lifelong learning. It suggests that recognition of non-formal/informal learning and how it functions as part of a credit transfer system are two important issues that require further study. This activity can draw upon earlier work by the OECD, which underlined the importance and urgency of further progress in the field of recognition of non-formal/informal learning and credit transfer. The *Thematic Review of Adult Learning*, the *Thematic Review of Career Guidance and Public Policy*, and the activity on *Co-Financing Lifelong Learning* identified the pivotal role of recognition and credit transfer such as in: i) strengthening the motivation of individuals to participate in lifelong learning; ii) clarifying and simplifying learning pathways; and iii) enhancing the financial and economic sustainability of lifelong learning.

There is a need for more extensive evidence on, among others, the actual use of different arrangements, the characteristics of users, the cost of difference arrangements, and the means for the public and private sector to finance them. As a follow-up activity to the activity on the *Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning*, a new activity was included in the 2005-2006 Programme of Work on the role of non-formal/informal learning and credit transfer in promoting lifelong learning. This paper aims to contribute to the former theme (recognition of non-formal and informal learning) within the framework of the project by offering a detailed account of public-private dimensions of such practices.

### **3. Methodologies and data collection techniques**

To contribute to developing relevant policy options, the research aims to relate the conceptual framework as closely as possible to evidence and empirical research results. It does not however intend to limit itself to the evidence of ‘current’ practices. The research is envisaged to be future-oriented to take evolutionary aspect on forms of and pathways to learning into account, the landscape surrounding the education systems is rapidly changing: i.e. ever-developing use of information and communication technologies in education, internationalisation of education and profession, blurring of vocational education and training and higher education, etc. To promote both tools (evidence-based research and future scenario) to apply to policy-making, the following process and methodologies are being considered.

1) To promote evidence-based policy-making, the research should carry out:

- Desk research. The main focus should be mapping of the existing systems and practices of the recognition of informal and non-formal learning within the framework of lifelong learning
- Quantitative data: To evidence of current practices, the research intends to develop indicators i) to stock (the number of people who have undertaken or are currently undertaking a procedure of recognition of non-formal and informal learning) and the number of people resuming learning after doing such recognition; ii) to monitor the number of people who have been rewarded for their learning records in the labor market, etc.) and iii) to monitor mobility of students, working professionals within and across countries who have taken up (flow) into a procedure of recognition of 'non-formal and informal learning' as a flexible pathways to learning.
- Country background reports. The basis for the data collection will be country information. Participating countries will be requested to prepare short focused background reports to provide the data. For countries to prepare reports, the Secretariat will prepare guidelines, which will elicit focused data. The research questions in this paper will be incorporated into the guidelines for country report.
- Focused thematic review visits. Given the heavily institutional nature of the issues, I intend to visit a few countries to assess the nature and functioning of the institutional arrangements for learning recognition, certification and portability. I intend to do interviews with those involved in managing the system as well as users of the system.

2) To generate future scenarios (rather 'research-based' than 'imaginative') of informal/non-formal learning, the desk research should be carried out with an aim to take stock of future scenario work already done in the field.